“The possession of knowledge carries an ethical responsibility.” Evaluate this claim.

The notion of knowledge carries a great responsibility for whoever possesses it. Many factors have to be taken into account and what type of implications could be caused in the release of certain factual evidence. To interpret this question many of the areas of knowing have to be looked into greater depth as there are several differences in each aspect that make them different to each other.

“The possession of knowledge carries an ethical responsibility” this statement suggests that if an individual obtains information from one source then they have the obligation to act upon this information in a way that they this is right or in a way that would benefit the majority of people in a certain situation.

This essay will look into the importance of a few Areas of Knowledge (AOK) – History, Ethics and Human Sciences- in various situations and professions and how this statement could be an implication to some professions. The statement can be answered in various ways the first is that no matter what the situation this statement is always correct and individuals should make it their duty to do the “right thing” in correlation to government laws or office/ work policies. The other view to this statement is that even though the situation could be true but it can be manipulated to benefit the larger portion of the population or the people involved depending on the situation. How do people justify what they need to tell others and who will benefit the most in situations such as these? If you are protecting a mass amount of people with certain information is it right not to tell them even if it affects the directly?

To fully understand this statement you first have to take into account that people have different ethical values in life, this is all influenced but various aspects such as culture, a person’s personal and professional environment and the media, all of these influences can have varying effect of different people and the ways that they act in certain situations can greatly depend on the reason that is used to justify judgments and emotion- how attached they are in these situation.

Firstly the media nowadays has increased significantly over the years and this particular aspect has many influences on people. Advancements in technology have enabled several media outlets to target various people but how much of what they tell you in reality is actually the truth? Looking into news outlets there are many exterior sources that also influence the way in which and what type of new is distributed and presented on news channels. For the journalists covering particular stories what are their own beliefs? Do they think that it is right to withhold certain information from the public or will it benefit more people if the complete truth is told?

Sometimes the media plays a key part in the withholding of information from the public and in some situations this could be both fatal and beneficial for them. An example of when the media was used to manipulate information for the benefit of a company was in 1982 in Chicago when seven people died after taking Tylenol capsules that had been laced with cyanide. To protect the company image and to make sure the blame was not shifted onto them the Johnson & Johnson Company removed all of their products off the market, advertised for others that had bought the capsules to bring them back, and made sure that everyone knew that they would work with the police and investigators to find out what happened. When these steps had been taken the public thought that the reason to why the people died was not the companies fault but instead it was a terrorist attack on them. **[[1]](#footnote-1)**

This shows the length that many companies go through to protect their own businesses, but the question is, is this the right way to do things? In this situation you could argue that because they took their products off the market and revised the production line and the entire chemicals used in the factories to prevent it from happening again before returning the capsule onto the market then this was an appropriate way to handle the situation. Taking the companies motive into consideration, you have to consider if they acted to protect the company’s image or to protect the vast amount of jobs that could have potentially been lost if they had not acted in the manner that they did. There has been an increase in the amount of companies advertising their products through the media but the problem with this is that there is never the complete certainty that these products can “cure” you form all your ailments, at the same time these companies never tell you the side effects that their products may give you. Does the public deserve to know if there are problems with products on the market? Or should companies keep this information to themselves and try to fix it secretly?

Those that study law know that after your client has told you their account of the story the lawyer is then not allowed to tell anybody else about what they had talked about because it was told in attorney-client privilege conditions, with these situations what if the client is guilty? What is their first thought about the situation then? With profession such as these ones you have to take into account the values that all parties involve carry and the extent at which either one will go to win, what are their moral codes. This is a very important aspect because many people are influenced by so many things- money usually has a large role in letting known criminals not be sentenced to any jail time. The moral principles that each individuals have allow them to justify the action they have just taken. This is because there are no such things as universal moral codes so if they believe that the method that they are taking is justified or right in any way then as a person with different moral principles you are not meant to judge them on what they did as your own way of doing things could also be disputed and criticised in the exact same way. Imagine watching a man getting shot and seeing the murderer’s face. Obviously your first thought is to go report the crime so the justice may be done but at the same time you are fearful of your own life as you do not know what will happen, if you still go to report the crime and end up going to trial and instead of the criminal going to jail he is let go as there is not enough “sufficient evidence”, this will make you regret testifying as it will seem that what you told the court was not important at all and now after all that the killer knows who you are. Where you right in going to report the crime or should you have just continued with whatever you had previously been doing?

When you imagine these situations happening to you, how is it any different to what happened to these people? It usually comes to the way you interpreted the situation, you try and figure out what is right and what is wrong but the main difficulty with this is that justifying what is right and wrong is no easy in any way.

I feel that when evaluating this claim you have to look at all the evidence that would lead you to agree or even disagree that “The possession of knowledge carries an ethical responsibility” as you also have to take into account many factors such as the type of knowledge that you have just obtained, is it serious or would it be considered useless information, what type of morals and values people have as there is not universal code that people have to follow and this leads to division to the question what is ethical and what is not? With the morals that certain people have how far are they willing to hide or communicate with people the information that they have. So to review the statement “The possession of knowledge carries an ethical responsibility” it can be said that there is not specific answer to it as you do not know the complications that this knowledge will bring and how it will affect the lives of the people around you.

1. http://faculty.washington.edu/baldasty/feb15.htm [↑](#footnote-ref-1)